/Information on the Gaugau, the belief that the spirit of persons born on Christmas Eve will be transformed into a ghost and on subsequent Christmas Eves, while the person is asleep, haunt the island only returning to its body at dawn, will be found in category 774./

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

844 824 One of the inmates then remembered that it was left in a drawer. What was his astonishment, on opening that drawer, to find that on the stem of the withered flower were brought forth *three* branches covered with leaves!!!

THE EVIL EYE

•754 755 Many of our people believe in the evil eye, and are of opinion that there are individuals who possess the power of inflicting injury by merely looking on those whom they wish to harm. It is, however, believed that any one who has been influenced by the evil eye of another, must procure a piece of cloth from the dress of the person by whom he has been fascinated, burn it, and expose himself to the smoke of it and

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

the effects of the evil eye will thus be removed.

Various charms are practised for counteracting the baneful influence of this cruel species of witchcraft. Some of the chief consist in spitting or making a big cross with the thumb on the belly while saying the words "tohrog il ghageb"; or sticking some brown wax—from the candles used during the Holy Week service—to the heads of the children or animals. Some again hung a sort of a sea-shell called *bahbuha* round the necks of the little ones, or cattle, to make them impervious to its effects. A pair of horns is also used by some as a charm to avert the evil-eye.

8:Brockman T-5 (no date) 1938
EZ6 Malta EZ6

174 584 825 which conferred on him "such Wisdom, Prowess, and good fortune . . . that Fame and Prosperity always attended him thereafter." Tennyson, describing his mystic Lady of the Lake, has:

> And o'er her breast floated the Sacred Fish.

The Saviour Himself was symbolized by the early Christians as a fish. Julius Africanus, an early Christian writer, said of Christ that He was the Great Fish, caught by the Hook of God, whose flesh nourishes the whole world.[1]

This bridal fish, then, may be in some sense a sacramental offering as well as a mere symbol.

534 789 828 The anointing of the bride's lips is yet another custom which, like the miniature "garden inclosed" of the marriageable girl, recalls the Canticle of Canticles:

> Thy lips my spouse are as a dropping honeycomb, honey and milk are under thy tongue. . . .[2]

585 174 The whole of this marriage ceremony is reminiscent of the old Fertility cults—the cakes, sweetmeats, nuts, grain, all in honour of the fertile Mother whose bountiful Earth is carried in a bowl bearing effigies of the bride and bridegroom whom it is hoped she will bless with her own fecundity and riches.

EVERYDAY HABITS

771 788 Grez, the housewife, will go about her daily tasks carefully following a thousand small rules, most of which have their English parallels. She will never cut a loaf without first making the Sign of the Cross on it with forefinger or knife. If the loaf falls to the ground, she will kiss it by way of asking pardon. She will not sweep her house after sunset for fear of [754] sweeping away good fortune. She will take care not to throw her "combings" out of doors. Should anyone wish her ill it

[1] *The Lost Language of Symbolism.* [2] *Song of Solomon*, IV, ii.

8:Brockman T-5 (no date) 1938
EZ6 Malta EZ6

will only be necessary for a "wise woman" or witch to spit on the hair while uttering a curse to bring misfortune upon the head which nourished it.

Grez will be careful not to laugh too heartily on a Friday—when the memory of the Crucifixion should make all sad. She will make the Sign of the Cross on leaving her house, on entering any vehicle or boat for no matter how short a journey, on cutting a piece of new cloth, before her baby's mouth when it yawns—so that evil spirits may not enter. On meeting a deformed or maimed person she will sign her corresponding limb or part of her body with the Cross.

When she brings flowers into her house she will be as careful to exclude the acacia as any West-country woman to avoid "may" or whitethorn, for the spiky Maltese acacia is the "thorn" of Palestine wherewith the Saviour was crowned.

These are but a few of the small ways in which the peasant woman pays a somewhat mixed homage to the Old Things as well as to the tenets of her Faith. In her favour it may be said that her "superstitions" are more logical than those of such folk who habitually "touch wood" or object to a third cigarette from one match.

THE FESTAS

The Festa, primarily a religious festival and a Holy Day of Obligation, provides the only relaxation for a hardworking and frugal people. Such simple pleasures as a meal of unaccustomed meat, a little wine, processions, and fireworks give full rein to the most lovable, childlike side of the national character. The importance attaching to these periodical holidays is well illustrated by an old rhyme: